

NORTH AMERICAN DISCS

ANNE AKIKO MEYERS and LARA ST JOHN offer enterprising violin recitals; CARLOS KAMAR premieres several works by Kernis; plus edge-of-seat Bartók from violinist URI PIANKA with JONATHAN ZAK

A fertile encounter

PAUL RILEY enjoys Susan Narucki's direct style with Ives



IVES

The Light That Is Felt: Songs
Susan Narucki (soprano),
Donald Berman (piano)
New World Records 80680-2
57:02 mins

ArkivMusic.com \$13.99

Given the critical editions used, and the 20-year immersion which resulted in Donald Berman's album *The Unknown Ives*, *The Light That Is Felt* comes with an impeccable Ivesian pedigree.

But none of this would count for anything if it wasn't for the fact that the disc represents a fertile meeting of minds belonging to two eloquent champions of 20th-century American music. Some of the songs set the likes of Byron and Milton, Heine and Keats; others record a day-to-day world, deepest emotion cheek-by-jowl with the whimsy of commonplace observation. The album opens with the lullaby-embrace of 'Songs my Mother taught me', which sets the scene with nostalgic warmth.

So often Ives demands an unselfconscious simplicity not all singers can muster. Susan Narucki knows how not to over-gild – never



CHAMPIONS: Donald Berman with soprano Susan Narucki

rendering maudlin the rich thread of nocturne and remembrance which runs throughout the artfully-plotted programme. The oppressed fragility

of 'Like a Sick Eagle' is something special on a very special disc indeed.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

RECORDING ★★★



SMILE

Works by Schubert, Pärt, Messiaen, Piazzolla etc
Anne Akiko Meyers (violin),
Akira Eguchi (piano)
Koch KIC-CD-7762 63:39 mins



LARA ST JOHN

Works by Hindson, Corigliano and Liszt
Lara St John (violin); Royal
PO/Sarah Ioannides
Ancalagon ANC 133 70:00 mins



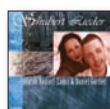
KERNIS

Symphony in Waves; Newly Drawn Sky; Too Hot Toccata
Grant Park Orch/Carlos Kalmar
Cedille CDR 90000 105
64:00 mins



A DAVIS

Amistad
Lyric Opera of Chicago/
Dennis Russell Davies
New World Records 80627-2
120:52 mins (2 discs)



SCHUBERT

Lieder
Rostorf-Zamir (soprano),
Gortler (piano)
Roméo Records 7265
55:45 mins



BARTÓK

Violin Sonatas
Pianka (violin), Zak (piano)
Roméo Records 7264
53:05 mins

ANNE AKIKO MEYERS's album opens with Charlie Chaplin's **SMILE** and ends with 'Somewhere over the Rainbow'; along the way Japanese folksong is set alongside Pärt, Piazzolla and Messiaen. At its heart is the great Schubert Fantasy, D934, rapt and almost heartbreaking at the start, Akira Eguchi's accompanying tremolando exquisitely judged; but what follows relocates Schubert towards the end of the 19th century. Yet Meyers's beautiful sound and control pay dividends in Pärt's crystalline *Spiegel im Spiegel* (★★★★). **LARA ST JOHN** also has beautiful sound and awesome control.

Her disc traverses three continents and ends with some 'death-defying' bravado in a not entirely convincing re-working of Liszt's *Totentanz*. The journey starts optimistically with the pulsating energy of 'Wind Turbine at Kooragang Island', the first of three postcards celebrating 'the spirit of Australia' in Matthew Hindson's Violin Concerto. It's a work whose language gets tugged in all sorts of directions, as is true (for different reasons) of John Corigliano's much-plundered score for *The Red Violin*. Conductor Sarah Ioannides coaxes generous, thoroughly-engaged playing from the RPO (★★★★).

Carlos Kalmar's all-**KERNIS** disc, taken from blemish-free live performances, features two premiere recordings ahead of the *Symphony in Waves*. *Newly Drawn Sky* is a seductively orchestrated, expansive essay in neo-Romanticism written in 2005. It's an alfresco score for alfresco performance, though Kalmar doesn't miss its urban undertow. *Too Hot Toccata*, meanwhile, is a concerto for (chamber) orchestra, an energetically-driven *perpetuum mobile* showcasing the players' evident virtuosity – though it could have done with a touch more incisiveness from Kalmar (★★★★).

Another 'live-to-disc' release is of the 1997 world premiere of **ANTHONY DAVIS's** *Amistad* – an opera originally conceived around the time of his *X: the Life and Times of Malcolm X*, but focusing the political debate over 100 years earlier on the eponymous slave ship revolt and its consequences. This tale of mutiny at sea includes jazz ensemble, blues and sorrow songs in a wide-ranging score underpinned by an alert (sometimes fidgety) rhythmic sense. Dennis Russell Davies directs a performance bristling with conviction (★★★).

From 'Im Frühling' to 'An die Musik' 15 songs later, Sharon Rostorf-

Zamir's **SCHUBERT** disc is a feast of Lieder 'pops'. But with similarly-programmed recitals by the likes of Janet Baker, Elizabeth Schwarzkopf or Fischer-Dieskau, the competition is fierce. And for all that Rostorf-Zamir has an eminently appealing vocal presence, it becomes increasingly clear that her interpretative powers, range of colours and feeling for the ambience of Lieder will not stand detailed comparison. 'Ganymed', for example, a beautiful scena-in-miniature, remains stubbornly earthbound (★★★).

By contrast, Uri Pianka and Jonathan Zak could never be accused of risk-aversion as they go with **BARTÓK's** frequently hard-edged flow. The utter unanimity of these edge-of-seat performances, recorded live (with an obligingly quiet but enthusiastic audience), unleashes richly-nuanced, vividly-articulated, muscular readings. Pianka embraces the folk and dance elements with gusto, dispensing vigorous, forceful double-stopping with relish; he's matched by Zak in a partnership evidently mutually enriching (★★★★).

Paul Riley
ArkivMusic.com: Ancalagon \$16.99; Cedille \$16.99; Koch \$14.99; New World \$29.98 (2 discs); Roméo \$15.49